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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 000704

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2018

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SUBJECT: CANADA TO PRESS G8 TO FUND AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN
BORDER ACTION PLAN

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Canadian-led Afghanistan-Pakistan Dubai Cooperation Workshop will publish a five-part border area action plan on June 16. Foreign Minister Bernier will urge G8 members to join Canada in funding the action plan at the June 26-27 G8 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Kyoto. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) South Asia Policy Advisor Rhett Sangster on May 20 briefed G8 country diplomats on progress by Afghanistan and Pakistan under the auspices of the Dubai Cooperation Workshop on border issues. Sangster characterized the four-stage workshop, launched in Dubai in November 2007, as part of Canada's response to the G8 Potsdam Statement on cooperative security relations. He noted that Canada was able to advance its border security agenda at the workshop in part by referring to border stations as "crossing points," thereby "skirting the high-intensity hot-button" border demarcation issue.

¶3. (SBU) In November in Dubai, the Afghans and the Pakistanis had agreed to cooperate in five areas: managing the movement of people (across the border); counternarcotics (CN); law enforcement; migration; customs (trade facilitation and transit, revenue collection, and security); and, "connecting government to the people in social and economic development." In Pakistan May 5-8, the two sides made progress on customs and CN, leaving the other three elements for the third meeting in Kabul May 27-30.

¶4. (SBU) The delegations agreed to six initiatives on customs:

- to extend crossing point hours to seven days a week from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset (until now, crossing points had been operating five to seven hours each work day, and were closed on Fridays and Sundays);
- to pursue a bilateral customs agreement;
- to begin joint training and information exchange with customs brokers in Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- to explore ways to share electronic customs information;
- to study the possibility of harmonizing customs forms; and,
- to collaborate on building facilities at crossing points such as Spin Boldak and Torkham.

¶5. (C) Sangster said the less productive and more volatile session (due to mutual recriminations over trafficking-related corruption) on counternarcotics produced only two initiatives:

-- to explore the possibility of establishing a senior CN working group that would devise ways to establish joint training, to improve information sharing and precursor management, to coordinate exercises, and to develop CN liaison officers within border liaison offices; and,
-- to communicate CN messages to inhabitants of the border region.

16. (SBU) Looking ahead, Sangster commented that the workshop phase of the initiative will end with a June 15-16 meeting in Dubai, where the two sides will publish a five-part joint action plan. Foreign Minister Bernier will then carry the action plan to the June 26-27 G8 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kyoto, where Sangster said Bernier will press his G8 counterparts to help fund the action plan as part of the G8 comprehensive economic strategy for the development of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region.

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